

<b>Name of School:</b>	Drumbeat School and ASD Service
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Marie Neave
<b>Hub:</b>	Shared Horizon Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Special. 4-19 Years
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Maintained Special School

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	22/05/2024
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of last QA Review:</b>	07/11/2022
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	19/03/2019

## Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

**Leadership at all levels** Leading

**Quality of provision and outcomes** Leading

### AND

**Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs**

**Area of excellence** Not Applicable

**Previously accredited valid areas of excellence** Community Engagement (Local and International)

**Overall peer evaluation estimate** Leading

***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.***

***Please note that Challenge Partners is a school improvement charity and not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding procedures, handling or behaviour policies, however, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns.***

## 1. Context and character of the school

Drumbeat School and ASD Service (Drumbeat), is a multi-site specialist provision in the London Borough of Lewisham. The largest of these provisions is the built-for-purpose Downham site. Surrounded by cramped residential streets with on-pavement parking, the high reception gates leave visitors with no clue about the oasis of space within its walls. Built in a quadrant over two floors, glass-sided corridors provide fantastic views of the school's pupils, having a brilliant time in their sports halls and playgrounds.

Drumbeat has 287 pupils in the 4–19 age range. All pupils have an education, health and care plan, with all of these having a primary diagnosis of autism. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium make up almost half of the cohort. Drumbeat reflects the borough's multicultural makeup, with 41 languages spoken at school.

Pupil attendance is well above the national metric for specialist schools, while persistent absence is well below. Pupils frequently attend school because they know the curriculum, the environment and the pedagogy will meet their complex special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). As one pupil explained, 'I come to school to learn and have fun!'

### 2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders have built the Drumbeat curriculum utilising the experiences of a wide range of trusted stakeholders. This included the integrated therapeutic team, ex-pupils, the families of the school and, of course, the wider teaching team. It is an ever-evolving piece that is refined year-on-year, and that is impacted by the research and training staff receive, through their professional development offer. In this way, the curricula at Drumbeat improves continuously, so the content is cutting-edge.
- Leaders are invested in ensuring that all staff joining Drumbeat have career improvement opportunities. Currently, there are six staff on unqualified teacher training plans. The support provided to these colleagues is embedded, but flexible to the challenges each of these colleagues has. The impact of this is multiple, in that Drumbeat benefits from new teachers who understand the 'Drumbeat way', and that these empowered individuals know the sky is the limit to their aspirations. Two members of the senior leadership team have used this pathway to trailblaze their way to the top.
- The integrated therapeutic team at Drumbeat is a key part of the leadership structure. As soon as a pupil starts at Drumbeat, speech and language therapists work with teachers, whose pupils have the most complex SEND, to ensure pupils have meaningful access to activities that develop sound awareness, support book exploration, and develop symbol understanding in a

visually rich environment. In this way, meaningful communication is developed and built on that gives each pupil 'their voice', even when a quarter of pupils are 'non-speaking'. As one colleague explained (at Drumbeat), 'speaking is not a prerequisite for reading'.

- For pupils ready to start accessing it, the school's chosen synthetic phonics package is adapted from the mainstream model. Consultants from the company come to Drumbeat termly, to collegiately look at how it is being delivered, and its impact on pupils' outcomes. Teachers are empowered, through experiential understanding, to push this methodology as far as it can be used. All staff are highly skilled in delivery through a continuous training and coaching model. Where the evidence shows that pupils are struggling to progress, teachers are unafraid to move the pupils' learning onto more successful means of communication. The phonics programme matches pupils' needs and, within its delivery, provides evidence on how pupils can communicate best.
- The senior leadership team is highly specialised and understands that its role is both within the school community, and also in sharing their expertise at a local, national, and international level. For example, 40 students studying for their masters of 'understanding autism' at University College London, visited recently, and senior leaders are undertaking international support to develop neuro-affirming teaching practice in Stockholm, Sweden. With a mission to improve outcomes for a neuro-diverse community, Drumbeat is forging a leading reputation for excellence.

## 2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

...none identified.

## 3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The curriculum at Drumbeat is ever-evolving to distinctly match the needs of every pupil. Each term, every pupil has an individualised 'learning map' shared with their families, that clearly shows the small step targets that they are trying to achieve. This builds through pupils' time at Drumbeat into a clear 'flightpath' for successful lives as adults with complex learning difficulties. With the right curricula offer, matched to individual SEND, pupils have every opportunity to fly across their Drumbeat experience.
- Pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 have clear access to careers information and have a meaningful skill acquisition curriculum to achieve this. They can talk animatedly about their work experience both within school, in the school's cafe making international foods on Fridays, and also off-site in the community. As one pupil explained, they had been 'In Corbett library, putting books into

alphabetical order, and at the barbers, washing and cutting hair, very gently'. Pupils are prepared for a purposeful life within their community.

- At Drumbeat, independence is encouraged across the school day, and when pupils need a learning break, this is supported and valued. For example, on the Turnham site, a pupil in a group activity left the circle to get a drink because that was what they needed. Once this need was met, the pupil went back and re-engaged with their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with direction when they need it, but they know the pupils well, skilfully supporting independence wherever they can.
- Every class on each of the Drumbeat sites is set up to match the needs of pupils' complex SEND. For example, on the Turnham site, classrooms are set up well. They include individualised visual timetables and workstations that link to a clear use of *Teacch* methodology, mathematics and literacy working walls, a 'focus wall' with an interactive white board, pupils learning maps, and core boards to support wider communication, at a height that makes them accessible to the pupils. Pupils have an environment and a pedagogy that matches their needs. Their stress is reduced, and with their communication and regulation needs met, they can get on with their learning alongside their classmates.
- At Drumbeat, pupils have the opportunity to develop their interoceptive skills. For example, in one Key Stage 1 class, pupils have an interoceptive session three times a week that focuses on noticing the body's signals. In one lesson, pupils have their awareness of their feet emphasised, playing 'where's the body part?' (while, of course, their shoes and socks are off). They then move around to music, playing 'Dinosaur Stomp'. After this, pupils undertake a textured walkway (rough, smooth and crunchy), and finally a sensory walk with different sensory aspects (oats, crushed-up dried noodles, jelly and finally water), should they want to give it a try. Pupils start to understand the signals their body is giving them, which supports the development of emotional regulation, which then improves the opportunity for engagement with their learning.
- Within each classroom across the Drumbeat sites, there are always a variety of learning outcomes being worked towards, within any class activity. These link to individual 'learning maps', working documents where the class team captures additional notes, comments and prompts. For example, in one class, pupils initially set out exploring the concepts of 'heavy' and 'light' together, quickly transitioning to a highly personalised task, using the pupils' personal motivating interests, to engage further learning and understanding. Staff then noted each pupil's specific achievements, highlighting the motivators that will have an impact when planning next steps. Pupils are engaged in interesting and meaningful learning, that they are naturally motivated to do.

### 3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

...none identified.

### 4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- Drumbeat values all communication methods pupils have. This has meant moving over time to a deeper understanding and use of total communication. For example, while a pupil is using a choice board, they may look at or tap a symbol, and staff accept this as a valid and respected means of communication. Staff model the use of alternative and augmentative communication, without the expectation that the pupils will need to mimic and/or repeat the action. This removes the stress on the pupils to communicate in a preferred way, while spending more energy enjoying their proximal learning activities.
- When discussing the challenges that are in the community, colleagues at Drumbeat talk about the poverty, deprivation, mental health and housing challenges their families have. With rising thresholds for multi-agency support, Drumbeat has a proactive and reactive team led by their family liaison officers. Their mantra is that they are 'always happy to talk and listen to you'. They provide an internal safety net. This academic year, 187 families have had independent support from this team. Families get the help they need, at the time they need it, rather than being left to fail.
- One of the main ways Drumbeat manages sensory food issues is through 'fun with food' sessions. For example, in one class, the class team started the activity with an *Attention Autism* 'attention grabber', followed by the teacher smashing potatoes on a tuff tray. Next, pupils took turns pouring ketchup onto the smashed potatoes, and finally, the pupils were encouraged to move to a potato volcano, filled with baked bean 'lava', to play with any aspect of this, in a way that makes sense to them. Some pupils used utensils to shape the volcano, added dinosaurs to the scene, explored the textures with their hands, and of course, for some, explored it through taste. Teachers set up cleverly thought-out activities that provoke the interest and excitement of the pupils, so they can elicit their internal motivations.

## **4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...**

...innovative practice was built upon even further, to ensure learning stays at the cutting edge, with a view to promoting pupils' independence and developing their leadership skills.

## **Following the QA Review**

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

For further support following your QA Review, schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)